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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000520

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [SO](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: MBEKI EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR AU IN SOMALIA, BUT NO ACTION

REF: PRETORIA 300 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Teitelbaum.  
Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Though President Mbeki said February 9 that South Africa will "respond appropriately" to the AU request for assistance in Somalia, we believe the SAG remains skeptical about the AU operation and is content to sit back and watch the situation evolve. However, a specific request for assistance from a regional leader, like Ethiopian PM Meles, would be difficult for President Mbeki to refuse. The SAG will not reconsider its refusal to deploy ground troops in Somalia, but might be willing to play other roles, such as training or equipping peacekeepers from a third country deploying to Somalia (like Mozambique or Burundi), providing officers for the AU headquarters element, supporting reconciliation efforts, or training TFG security forces. END SUMMARY.

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SAG Acknowledges Call for Help  
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12. (U) President Mbeki said in his February 9 State of the Nation address that South Africa "will respond appropriately" to the African Union call for assistance in Somalia. (NOTE: On January 25, DefMin Lekota said that South Africa will not send troops to Somalia (reftel). END NOTE.) Mbeki stressed the importance of reconciliation efforts, which "ensure that the protagonists within Somalia interact with one another to find a solution that is inclusive and practicable, based on the need to achieve national reconciliation."

13. (U) The President's comments follow those of DepForMin Aziz Pahad, who said February 5 that South Africa is "looking at alternative ways" to assist in Somalia. He stressed that South Africa will only become involved when requested by the appropriate regional organization, in this case the InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Pahad also said that the AU Summit "viewed the holding of a national reconciliation process as a requirement to restore peace, security, and stability."

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Peace Talks Should Be in Somalia  
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14. (C) In response to rumors that South Africa might host Somali reconciliation talks, DepForMin Aziz Pahad told the Norwegian ForMin the week of February 7 that the SAG wants any negotiations to be held inside Somalia. In a February 12

conversation with PolCounselor, a Pretoria-based Norwegian diplomat said Pahad told his ForMin that he would publicly announce the SAG position on the venue for the Somali talks (although Pahad has not done so yet).

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ANC Insider Skeptical; Says Regional Request Key  
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15. (SBU) University of South Africa (UNISA) Professor and ANC insider Iqbal Jhazbhay told PolOff February 7 that South African officials are skeptical about the AU mission in Somalia. South Africa is looking to guidance from the IGAD regional leaders. Jhazbhay noted that Prime Minister Meles and President Mbeki have a good relationship, and that the Mbeki would likely consider any requests from Meles favorably. (NOTE: As a long-time member of the African National Congress (ANC) and academic expert on the Horn of Africa, Jhazbhay is well-informed and influential on SAG Somali policy. END NOTE.)

16. (SBU) Jhazbhay expressed his personal opinion that the AU mission in Somalia was unlikely to succeed. He believes the AU force will be viewed as partisan supporters of the Darod clan and will become embroiled in clan warfare. While South African troops are certainly stretched thin (the reason DefMin Lekota said the SAG could not contribute troops), Jhazbhay believes that Lekota's decision reflected his view that peacekeepers will be killed in Somalia. The lack of a strong regional anchor -- like Nigeria in Liberia and South Africa in Burundi -- is another weakness of the AU operation.

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PRETORIA 00000520 002 OF 002

Comment  
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17. (C) While President Mbeki continues to express his public support for the AU Somali mission, we believe there is considerable skepticism among SAG/ANC policymakers about the operation. At this point, the SAG is content to sit back and watch the situation evolve. That said, it would be difficult for Mbeki to refuse a request for a specific contribution to the AU mission, especially if it came from a regional leader, like PM Meles. This could include training or equipping peacekeepers from a third country deploying to Somalia (like Mozambique or Burundi), providing officers for the AU headquarters element, involvement in reconciliation efforts, or training for TFG security forces (as the SAG did in Burundi and DRC).  
BOST